

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Domiciliary No. 1
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-A

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
19-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,
DOMICILIARY NO. 1

HABS No. MN-74A

Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,
Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota
Department of Veterans' Affairs
St. Paul, Minnesota

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home.

Present Use: Leased by Prodigal House, a veterans' chemical
dependency treatment program.

Significance: Building Number One is the first of five original
cottages built for the Minnesota Soldiers' Home
by W.B. Ounnell in 1888. It was used for nearly
10 years as the Headquarters and also as the
residence of the Adjutant and Quartermaster,
until they were moved to the Administration
Building. Today it is in the best condition of
all the cottages still standing.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1888-1889 (Source: Annual Report by the Board of Trustees, 1889.)
2. Architect: Warren B. Ounnell.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
1887 Legislative Act for acquiring a Soldiers Home.
1888 Property accepted from the City of Minneapolis by the
State of Minnesota.
4. Building, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Not available.
6. Alterations and additions: Between 1892 and 1906 two wooden
sheds were added to the southwest side of the building, with
access to them via basement doors. Between 1906 and 1929 a
large porch was added to the front facade (northeast) covering
but not removing the original stone arched portico. By 1941 the
first fire escapes were put on the southeast side.

B. Historical Context:

In 1887 several of the state's legislators, including Mr. Henry A. Castle (first president of the Board of Trustees), put their heads together to find a way for Minnesota to care for its thousands of disabled veterans. As many were living in poor houses, the committee (made up of members from all jurisdictions) decided to include a provision for a state-sponsored facility in addition to monetary compensation in their bill.

After some debate, the bill was passed. Many cities across the state offered land for the site of the new home, and the land offered by Minneapolis was finally selected. A competition for state architects was held and Mr. Warren B. Dunnell was selected to design the Soldiers' Home. Working in partnership with Horace A. Cleveland, Mr. Dunnell devised a comprehensive plan which allowed for the addition of later buildings. It is known as the 'cottage plan'.

The legislature appropriated \$50,000 of which no more than \$10,000 was to be paid for the site. With this money two cottages and a heating plant were built, in 1888. The Soldiers' Home was not given funds to achieve its landscaping plan until the late 1890's; however, the members worked on their own to implement as much as possible prior to that time.

For its first 10 years, Domiciliary No. 1 served a multi-purpose program. Initially it housed some veterans as well as the Headquarters for the Soldiers' Home. Later it was the residence for the Adjutant and Quartermaster, the Headquarters, a residence for some members, and it also provided storage and some of the domestic needs of the members of the Home. By 1900 it was only a residence for members, and today it is used primarily for a residence for the Prodigal House, a chemical dependency program for the veterans.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The two-story, red pressed brick Richardsonian Romanesque building has a vast, overhanging hip roof with two brick chimneys at opposite ends. There are two one-story porches. Two wooden sheds are attached to the southwest side where the basement story is fully exposed. Brown Lake Superior sandstone is used for ornamental details, belt courses at first- and second-floor levels and round arches on all second-story windows. Brackets at the cornice line give the structure an Italianate feeling.

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2. Condition of fabric: Structurally Domiciliary No. 1 is in fair condition; however, it does not meet present building code requirements for institutional facilities. The brick facade shows signs of considerable water damage, and some joints no longer have mortar in them.

A 1985 study for the State of Minnesota shows that it would not be economically feasible to bring the building up to code.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Minnesota Veterans' Home is located at the confluence of the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek, in the South 1/2 of the Northwest 1/4 and the Southwest 1/4 of Section 17, T28, R23.

Domiciliary No. 1 is 35 feet on its long side and approximately 20 feet on its short side.

2. Foundations: One foot thick limestone basement walls support the structure.
3. Walls:
 - a. Northeast elevation: The two-story northeast facade sits at the highest point on the site and is the front facade of Domiciliary No. 1. The facade is divided into three bays; a one-story porch in the middle covers the original round-arched portico. At ground level there is one course of rough faced limestone, and at the first- and second-floor lines is a rough faced brown sandstone belt course. Each story has a group of five windows in each of the end bays. There is sandstone detailing around the first- and second-story windows; the second-story detailing being elaborate round arches with brick ornamental detail as well. Above the first-story lintel is a brick flat arch flush with the facade. In the second-story middle bay there is a group of four windows, separated by squat doric columns, but having the same detailing as the neighboring windows. On this facade the basement windows are clerestory windows; above each set is a brick segmented arch flush with the facade.
 - b. Southeast elevation: Here the ground begins to slope downward, thus gradually exposing more of the basement (this is reflected in the size of basement windows). The limestone ground course and sandstone belt courses continue around this and the other two facades of Domiciliary No. 1. This facade is divided into two bays; on each story are two

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sets of two windows each. The detailing described for the northeast facade is carried around the building so a continuity exists. Two fire escapes begin at opposite ends at the second-story and meet in the middle at the first-story before continuing to the ground.

- c. Southwest elevation: The basement story is fully exposed on this facade. There are three bays here as on the front facade, broken at basement level by the arbitrary placement of the two single-story wooden sheds. On each story the windows are arranged in the end bays in groups of six, and in the middle bay in a group of two. The window details remain the same. Two fire escapes run from either side at second-story to meet in the middle on the first, and then continue to the ground.
 - d. Northwest elevation: Original to Domiciliary No. 1, the one-story porch on this facade plays a major role in the character of the facade. Three narrow bays contain two windows each on the second-story. The first-story has a double door in place of the middle set of windows. Because of the upward-sloping ground and the porch, there is only one basement window.
- 4. Structural system, framing: Domiciliary No. 1 is a frame structure, faced with red pressed brick and Lake Superior sandstone. The basement is limestone.
 - 5. Porches:
 - a. Northeast elevation: This one-story porch was added circa 1900 and has a flat roof. Despite this contradictory detail, its classical roofline and materials -- rough faced sandstone and pressed brick -- give it a similar character to the main building. It has four massive square corner posts and is screened in.
 - b. Northwest elevation: This porch is original to the building and has a similar roofline. It is no longer than it is wide, with a middle post on the long side. Also of pressed brick with sandstone details the porch has carried the limestone ground course onto and up its stairs.
 - 6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The northeast facade has a Richardsonian style round arched portico behind the porch. The rear (southwest) facade has a single door in its middle bay at basement level. The northwest facade contains a double door which exits to the porch.

- b. Windows: All are wood, double-hung sash windows, with 1/1 lights. Each group of windows has sandstone lintels and sills; the second-story windows have round arches over each with decorative detail around them.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip-roof, originally covered with slate shingles, now covered with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Considerable overhang, the underside of which has brackets like an Italianate building. The northeast porch has a classical edge with dentils.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. General: The building was originally installed with oak woodwork and maple flooring. The basement plan accommodated a kitchen and dining area; today it is an arts and crafts workshop.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: Domiciliary No. 1 was built as the first residential building in the Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex. It faces northeast on a slight rise, which has been previously noted, was incorporated into the design of the building. There is a main road and a secondary access road which run along the north and southwest of the building. A few trees are scattered on the site. Domiciliary No. 1 faces Domiciliary No. 2 to its northeast.
- 2. Other buildings in the complex:
 - a. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888)
 - b. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891)
 - c. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1891)
(Foundation only remains)
 - d. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905)
 - e. Main Dining Room No. 7 (1902)
 - f. Domiciliary Building No. 9 (1936)
 - g. Administration Building No. 10 (1892)

- h. Storage Building (1921)
- i. Warehouse No. 13 (1891)
- j. Power House No. 14 (1937)
- k. Paint Shop and Garage (1899)
- l. Ten-stall Garage (1925)
- m. Steel Bridge (1908)
- n. Commissary No. 12 (1950)
- o. Chapel-Auditorium No. 15 (1962)
- p. Infirmary-Clinic No. 16 (1973)
- q. Residential Care No. 17 (1977)

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Insurance Maps: A series from 1892 to 1941 explicitly show the Minnesota Veterans' Home at four different points in time.
- B. Photos: Located at the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minneapolis Public Library are a number of photos, mostly from circa 1900, but ranging to the 1970's.
- C. Bibliography:
 - 1. Books:

Annual Reports of the Board of Trustees, Minnesota Soldiers' Home, Including the Disbursement of the Soldiers' Relief Fund.
St. Paul: Pioneer Press Co., 1888-1889.
 - 2. Publications:

EBS Management Consultants, Inc. Study of the Minnesota Veterans' Home Conducted for the Minnesota State Department of Administration. Management Sciences Department: Washington, D.C., July 1968.

Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Minnesota, Committee on the Soldiers Home. The Report of the Committee on the Soldiers' Home. 1917.

Minnesota Soldiers Home. 1911.

Minnesota Soldiers Home. November, 1930.

State of Minnesota. Minnesota Laws Relating to the Minnesota Soldiers' Home and Soldiers' Relief Fund. Published by the Board of Trustees, 1946.

3. Miscellaneous:

"Alternative Use of Building 1-5 on the Minneapolis Campus of the Minnesota Veterans' Home/Department of Veterans' Affairs", November, 1985. Minnesota State Documents Depository System / 86 001.

Karelis, Kimon, secretary. "Report of the creation, evolution and purpose of the Minnesota Soldier Home and Soldiers' Relief Fund", 1943.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historic Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Lisa Haller, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.